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ABSTRACT

The category of substance is fundamental in Leibniz's philosophy, and conceived in specifically theological terms in his late correspondence with Bartholomaeus des Bosses. The exchange develops as a discussion of the bond of substance (vinculum substantiale) in the transubstantiated eucharistic host, but the bond also provides the basis for a general theory of universal substance. This eucharistic vision of the substance of the world is appropriated by Maurice Blondel as the basis of his philosophy of action, in which divine transforming activity is necessarily implied, and which he describes as a form of transubstantiation of both the subject of action and its material object. This Leibnizian-Blondelian theology of the divine transformation of the substance of the world provides eucharistic foundations for modern catholic social teaching.

Modern catholic theology has not sufficiently recognized its indebtedness to the ecumenical and universalist philosophical theology of a Hanoverian Lutheran. Gottfried Leibniz's attempt to account for the consistency of the transubstantiated eucharistic host as due to Christ acting on it as the 'bond of substance' was appropriated by Maurice Blondel and provided eucharistic foundations for his philosophy of action. The latter profoundly shaped catholic theology through the twentieth century, but its eucharistic origins are rarely acknowledged.

LEIBNIZ AND DES BOSSES

Fundamental to René Descartes' attempt to establish a basis for objective knowledge of the world was the division of reality into material being and spiritual being. An effect of this separation was that the possibility of the existence of individual material substances was excluded.<sup>1</sup> Bodies of all kinds were, in the Cartesian universe, just various different chunks of one continuous, homogenous and extended material substance. The only individual substances were spiritual ones, otherwise known as minds or mental substances. These Cartesian distinctions provide a helpful opening onto Leibniz's own understanding of substance. In several of his later works, including the Monadology, Leibniz conceives of substance in spiritual terms similar to those of Descartes, on the grounds that mind provides matter with a 'substantial form' to animate or inform it.<sup>2</sup> So far as his earlier work is concerned, interpretations have differed. Some have identified a distinct theory of material substance there, suggesting that Leibniz then believed that the action of mind on matter communicated a real substantial unity to matter, the

unity of which would otherwise be purely phenomenal.<sup>3</sup> Others have argued that he advocated an essentially Cartesian notion of substance as spiritual, rather than material, even in his early work. One objective of this essay is to present Leibniz as a philosopher fundamentally concerned, even in his later work, to develop a coherent theory of the nature of substance.

A second larger objective can be defined. Popular reading of Leibniz has continued for too long in the shadow of Bertrand Russell, who presents him as the creator of a logical, self-consistent, and ultimately self-referential philosophical system similar but inferior to that of Spinoza.<sup>4</sup> Many of Leibniz's interpreters have also tended to posit God—in so far as they discuss this fundamental part of his philosophy—as a logical object needed to complete arguments about the creation, preservation and governance of the world. This is Procrustean treatment of episodic work, however, which finds expression in no single magnum opus, but is developed in many brief texts and in letters to more than 600 different correspondents. Recent years have seen some significant work on Leibniz's links to figures with theological interests, such as Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, Francis van Helmont and Anne Conway.<sup>5</sup> Leibniz's significance as an ecumenist in a period of intense religious conflict is also a topic in which there has been intermittent interest.<sup>6</sup> The following examination of Leibniz's theory of the bond of substance will draw attention to some of the theological and ecumenical implications of his philosophy, and will stake a claim for a conception of substance as a real unity of spirit and matter in which substance is distinct not only from matter but also from spirit, acting on them to bind them together.

Scholastic tradition, with which Leibniz was imbued, had conceived the bond in more limited terms. As Francisco Suárez states in De causa formali substantiali:

This mode of union is a sort of medium or chain [*vinculum*] between the form and the matter, and it, therefore, touches and affects both in some way and, hence, depends on both in its coming to be and in its being. As a result this mode of the rational soul, although it is in its own entity something spiritual, nevertheless participates in the conditions of a material thing because it both completely depends upon matter and is in its own way extended along with matter, although it does not have extension on the side of the soul.<sup>7</sup>

Figures including José Ferrater Mora have highlighted the many continuities between the worlds of Suárez and Leibniz. Yet as Mora makes clear in his discussion of the *vinculum substantiale*, identity of language by no means signifies identity of meaning.<sup>8</sup> Suárez, while denying any real distinction between existence and essence, sees the *vinculum* as educed more from the potency of soul than from the potency of matter. The suggestion that a non-existing essence is just as incomprehensible as an inessential existent can be seen as an attempt to negotiate a path between « un souci du concret » and « un vertige de l'abstraction ».<sup>9</sup> Yet to Leibniz, the notion that the bond is dependent upon that which it bonds would ultimately be unsatisfactory.

Leibniz develops the concept of the bond of substance (the vinculum substantiale) in correspondence with the Jesuit scholar Bartholomaeus des Bosses. Leibniz had for a long time been aware of his affinity for Jesuits grounded in several common interests: internationalism, intellectual and political ambitions, theology, and anti-Cartesianism.<sup>10</sup> The exchange of letters, written in Latin, began in 1706 and continued until Leibniz's death in 1716, with the concept itself being developed during 1712.<sup>11</sup> The antecedents of the vinculum can be found in a brief discussion about angelic bodies. In three early letters to des Bosses, written during the autumn of 1706, Leibniz lays foundations, perhaps unwittingly, for the discussion of transubstantiation by refuting the Thomist opinion that angels do not always have bodies. (It was supposed that angels assumed a body when sent on missions by God, but did not while attending on God.)<sup>12</sup> In fact, Leibniz states, all spiritual beings, both angels and humans, need a body. The only exceptions are God, and any being in whom God miraculously supplants matter.<sup>13</sup>

This concern for universal embodiment forms a prelude to the discussion of transubstantiation, which became the principal topic in the correspondence three years later in 1709. The eucharist had remained a key philosophical concern of Leibniz's from the period of his earlier work, not least because the notion that the body of Christ could be in different places at the same time effectively disproved the Cartesian notion of substance as extension.<sup>14</sup> Leibniz had, for a long time, wished to provide a philosophical demonstration of transubstantiation compatible with the Tridentine definition but using essentially Aristotelian categories.<sup>15</sup> He now advances, in turn, three distinct theories of Christ's presence in the eucharistic host. The first focuses on the classic problem of 'real accidents'. In other words, how could the appearance of bread persist once deprived of its subject? Leibniz responds to des Bosses:

If you wish the real accidents to remain without a subject, it is necessary to say that, after the suppression of the monads constituting the bread, including their primitive active and passive forces, in order to substitute for them the presence of monads constituting the body of Christ, there remain only the derivative forces which were in the bread and which produce the same phenomena as those which had produced the monads of bread.<sup>16</sup>

In this explanation, transubstantiation therefore requires the suppression of the monads of the bread. Four months later, Leibniz outlines a second theory:

Since the bread is not, in fact, a substance, but a being by aggregation, that is to say, substantiated from innumerable monads by the addition of a sort of Union, it is in this union that its substantiality consists. Also, it is not necessary ... that God abolish or change these monads, but only that God removes that by which they form an original being, i.e. the union itself; thus the substantiality which results from it will be abolished, even though the phenomenon remains, which from that point onwards does not originate in those monads but in something equivalent

to their union which is substituted for it by divine action. In that way, no substantial subject is, in truth, present.<sup>17</sup>

This second account is significant in distinguishing substantiality from mere phenomenal aggregation, and in its identification of a union, which results from divine action, as the cause of substantiality. In this version, it is not the monads which are abolished, but simply their union. Both theories are, however, superseded by Leibniz's definitive description of the bond of substance offered in 1712. He writes to des Bosses:

I should think that your theory of transubstantiation can be explained by retaining the monads, which seem to fit the reason and order of the universe perfectly, but with a bond of substance [sic] added by God to unite the body of Christ to the monads of bread and wine, and the former bond of substance [sic] destroyed, and its modifications and accidents with it. Thus there would remain only the phenomena of the monads of bread and wine, which would have been there if no bond of substance had been added by God to these monads.<sup>18</sup>

The portion of this third account dealing with the initial union between the monads of bread and wine is similar to the second, except that the concept of a bond of substance (vinculum substantiale) is introduced explicitly in order to explain the union. The part of the explanation dealing with the transubstantiated host is significantly different, however. In the second version, the monadic union is abolished and replaced with something equivalent to it which is not however itself a union. Yet in this third version union remains, and is indeed intensified. This union is similar to the preceding one in that it is caused by a bond of substance, but different in so far as it associates the monads with the body of Christ rather than with each other.

When describing transubstantiation to des Bosses as 'your theory', Leibniz clearly distances himself from any personal commitment to it. Indeed, it is unlikely that Leibniz, being a Lutheran, himself ever espoused catholic eucharistic theology, and it is commonly accepted that during the final twenty years of his life he received communion just once, in Vienna in a Lutheran church during a plague.<sup>19</sup> When discussing the nature of eucharistic consecration, Leibniz certainly prefers to understand the host as a real presence of the body of Christ received with the bread, rather than as the actual body of Christ. He states that the 'Evangelicals', i.e. the Lutherans

teach only that, in receiving the visible symbols, we receive in an invisible and supernatural manner the body of our Saviour, without its being enclosed in the bread; and the presence which they mean is not local or spatial, so to speak... What they mean by the substance of the body does not consist in extension or dimension... In order to show the absurdity of their doctrine, it would be necessary to show that the entire essence of the body consists only in extension ... which no-one, so far as I know, has yet done.<sup>20</sup>

An understanding of the eucharist as revealing the real presence of Christ is therefore, at the very least, a continuing possibility of faith. Leibniz's primary intellectual objection to transubstantiation is not theological but philosophical, and specifically to the notion of real accidents apparently required by the Tridentine definition of transubstantiation to account for the persistence of the accidents of bread and wine following the suppression of their substances. Descartes also, like Leibniz, rejected emphatically the concept of real accidents, preferring instead to interpret the form of the bread which is perceived as the surface common to the particles of bread and to the bodies which surround them.<sup>21</sup> Leibniz would not, of course, have stated his objection in these Cartesian terms. He nevertheless obviously found it difficult to accept the complete severing of the relation between phenomenon and substance that the Council of Trent supposed, because fundamental to his metaphysics is the harmony between the spiritual/mental order and the material order.

On closer examination however, Leibniz's attitude to transubstantiation is ambivalent. He had stated in a letter to Arnauld that the doctrines of transubstantiation and real presence are ultimately identical, and speculated to des Bosses that the only way of accounting for the mystery of the incarnation is in terms of real bonds or unions.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that presence and mystery cannot be excluded from Leibniz's metaphysics purely on the basis that they are miraculous interventions in the normal order of the world. Indeed, the possibility that the miracle of transubstantiation reveals a more profound truth about the created order is presented by the thoroughly Thomist discussion in the Discourse about miracles being in conformity with the general order of the universe yet contrary to the subordinate rules normally operative within it.<sup>23</sup> The effect of transubstantiation—that is, the substantial presence of the body of Christ as a bond—expresses, in other words, the fact that God is the true cause of all substances. Transubstantiation, being one aspect of the extraordinary concourse, or perpetual creation, of the world by God, cannot be foreseen by the reasoning of any created mind, because it illumines supernaturally the understanding of minds.

In a crucial yet ambiguous passage, Leibniz describes the necessity of the bond of substance for establishing the reality of the composite bodies which comprise the wider created order. He writes:

Either bodies are mere phenomena, in which case extension too will be only a phenomenon and only monads will be real, but the union will be supplied in the phenomenon by the action of the perceiving soul; or if faith [fides] urges us to assert corporeal substances, substance consists in that unifying reality which adds something absolute and hence substantial, even though fluid, to the things to be united.<sup>24</sup>

Noteworthy here is the identification of fides as prompting belief in corporeal substances, and the association of substantiality with 'something absolute ... even though fluid'. Fides does not necessarily designate a religious affirmation, being used to refer to a wider form of belief or plausibility as well. Nevertheless, in contrasting pure phenomenology with a realist notion of substance in which 'something

absolute’ insinuates itself, Leibniz leaves open the suggestive metaphysical possibility that there are either two realisms or none: either the preservation of material substance is possible only by the action of an actually existing divinity; or all that exists is phenomenal and a construction of human consciousness, and humanity therefore has no reason affirm God’s existence.

Leibniz defends his new conception of material substance as established neither by the monads themselves, nor by a dominant monad governing them, but by ‘something absolute’, in robust terms to des Bosses:

If you deny that what is superadded to the monads is of the nature of a substance, you cannot say that a body is a substance, for it will then be a mere aggregate of monads; and I fear that you will fall back upon the mere phenomenality of body.<sup>25</sup>

Leibniz continues by denying the sufficiency of his leitmotif, pre-established harmony, to account for material substance:

It cannot be proven from the principle of harmony that there is anything in bodies besides phenomena. For we know on other grounds that the harmony of phenomena in souls does not arise from the influence of bodies but is pre-established. This would suffice if there were only souls or monads; in this case all real extension would also disappear, not to speak of real motion, whose reality would be reduced to mere changes in phenomena.<sup>26</sup>

It thus becomes apparent that Leibniz is not agnostic about the choice between phenomenology and realism that he has presented. The reality of extension and motion as attributes of substance impel his reflections beyond pure phenomenology to defend a realist notion of material substance and, by implication, of divinity.

## MAURICE BLONDEL

The period 1875–90 saw the publication in Berlin of Leibniz’s Philosophischen Schriften under the editorship of C.I. Gerhardt. This enterprise provides the immediate intellectual context for Blondel’s choice of the vinculum substantiale as the topic for his Latin thesis. He made this choice as early as 1880, he explains in a letter to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, on graduating from lycée and entering Dijon University where Henry Joly was delivering a course on Leibniz’s vinculum.<sup>27</sup> Joly’s realist interpretation of Leibniz, and recognition of the significance of the vinculum doctrine as part of this, became Blondel’s own, remaining present even following the latter’s installation at the Sorbonne under the supervision of the prolific Émile Boutroux, whose own reading of the vinculum was idealist.<sup>28</sup> Leibniz’s interest in the doctrine was, as has been seen, primarily philosophical. It is clear, in contrast, that Blondel’s choice of topic was motivated by spiritual concerns just as much as by intellectual ones.

Daily communion was of foundational importance in his religious life throughout his years of doctoral study, in stark contrast with Leibniz's decades of estrangement from the sacrament.<sup>29</sup>

Blondel explores in his thesis how the bond of substance reveals the limits of Leibniz's later idealism.<sup>30</sup> This interpretation of Leibniz has been marginal in much recent interpretation, yet Blondel regards it as having decisive religious and metaphysical import. It also answers points on which Leibniz was pressed by correspondents during his own lifetime. René Joseph de Tournemine, another Jesuit, complained to Leibniz in 1703 that his metaphysics failed to give a convincing account of substance. In a discussion of the union between soul and body, Tournemine states:

It is necessary to find a principle which demonstrates that there is between these two substances not only of harmony, and of correspondence; but also a link [*liaison*] and an essential dependence: a union not only moral and ideal, dependent on an arbitrary law, but real and effective: a union of possession and of ownership, and not only of habitation or usage... In a word, there must be a principle which shows that there is between such a body and such a soul, a relation [*rapport*] that is natural, essential and necessary.<sup>31</sup>

Blondel draws particular attention to what he describes as « la méditation secrète » appended to the crucial letter of 5 February 1712, published for the first time by Gerhardt. In a crucial paragraph, Leibniz delineates a material universe preserved in existence by divine power. He states:

God does not regard only single monads and the modifications of each, but also their relations, and it is in that which consists the reality of relations and true reality... But besides these real relations is one more perfect, which from a multiplicity of substances produces a new one. And that will not be a simple result, that is to say, will not consist in true or real relations alone, but will add a new substance, which will not be only the effect of divine understanding, but also of divine will... And it is in that which consists the metaphysical bond of the soul and body, which constitutes a single suppositum, for which one finds an analogy in the union of natures in Christ.

And these are the elements which make a being one in itself, or a unique suppositum.<sup>32</sup>

This union of the soul and body does not inhere only in the human person. Leibniz, a good Aristotelian in his understanding of soul, states in the roughly contemporaneous Monadology that every composite substance has a soul in the sense of a general perception or appetite which makes it a source of its own internal actions.<sup>33</sup>

Blondel therefore finds highly suggestive Leibniz's comparison of this new substance resulting from divine will which unifies composite substances in Christ, and links this directly with Leibniz's eucharistic theology. He states in a paper for Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

The question raised by Leibniz and des Bosses concerning transubstantiation during the Eucharist leads us to conceive of Christ, without detriment to the constituent monads, as the



bond which makes substantiation possible, the vivifying agent for all creation: vinculum perfectionis.<sup>34</sup>

In a French resumé of his thesis published in 1930, Blondel regards Leibniz's failure fully to appraise the metaphysical implications of the vinculum to be the principal shortcoming of his philosophy. Blondel contends:

Despite so much effort to make with his bond a superior being, a vivifier, a single explanation, Leibniz brought forth scarcely more than a stillborn, even less, a neutral expression, a sort of peg, something simultaneously extrinsic and dependent; whereas he needed to produce a transcendence immanent to all that it causes, animates and binds together from inside, a sort of form of goodness and perfection. In so doing, he falls again under the conceptual yoke that he has wished and believed himself to have surpassed, yet still remains halfway to liberation.<sup>35</sup>

Blondel protests that neither correspondent fully recognized the significance of the doctrine of the bond of substance:

Neither des Bosses nor Leibniz himself gave to the perspective half-opened by the vinculum the importance that it could and should assume if it is necessary to reorganize all first philosophy as a function of this doctrine, which is nothing if not its goal and coronation.<sup>36</sup>

The action of the vinculum substantiale extends, Blondel now argues, far beyond the eucharist: 'It is thus nature in its entirety and the whole of metaphysics that is called into question by the theory of the vinculum.'<sup>37</sup>

The purpose of the thèse secondaire—which, until the early twentieth century, had to be produced in Latin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the prestigious doctorat d'état—was to expound a historical aspect of the longer thèse principale, in which Blondel developed his philosophy of action.<sup>38</sup> The latter became far better known, but its genesis has been largely overlooked. Blondel himself described his philosophy of action as the oak which grew out of the acorn planted by Leibniz.<sup>39</sup> His argument in De vinculo substantiali that substance is ultimately dependent on divine action is similar to his better-known presentation in L'Action of the same essential intuition that the phenomenon of human action implies and requires the insinuation of something absolute to motivate it. This shows a clear parallelism between the unification of eucharistic substance by an absolute principle, and the unification of the divided will in action by the absolute.<sup>40</sup> Blondel defines action as a 'synthesis of willing, knowing and being, that bond of the human composite which cannot be cut without destroying what has been torn apart', and states that action 'naturalizes the absolute in the relative itself'.<sup>41</sup> He later describes the bond in explicitly christological terms as the 'union which constitutes us, this bond which we will from ourselves to Him as He willed it from Himself to us'.<sup>42</sup> Blondel finally refers his discussion of the bond of action back to its origins in eucharistic transformation in the Leibniz–des Bosses correspondence:

Literal practice must be like a ferment that leavens little by little, by an imperceptible progress, all the weight of the members. Once we begin to entertain within ourselves this vivifying force, a slow work of transubstantiation and conversion takes place in our carnal mass, in our desires and in our appetites.<sup>43</sup>

Action effects, in other words, a similar change in the human person as does the bond of substance in the eucharist, transforming the person and the larger world of which they are part. Blondel also describes, however, the wider consequences of human action for the world eucharistically. He states:

Just as a piece of bread becomes, by a word, the living Christ, so do our actions, by a right and noble intention, construct the mystical body of God. It is by them that the world in its entirety must be transubstantiated: this miracle is directly fulfilled only in the eucharist, to teach us also to transfigure, to supernaturalize the smallest grain of wheat, the most lowly of our occupations.<sup>44</sup>

Blondel, it must be remembered, was neither ordained nor a member of any religious order. Comments such as these reveal that a crucial part of his project was to develop a renewed sense of the significance of the eucharist for lay people, which far from prescinding from transubstantiation, adopts it as the model for the material transformation which all Christians are called to effect through their daily work in the world.

Blondel had wished to conclude his trilogy Philosophy and the Christian Spirit with a volume giving a systematic account of the social, political and educational principles which would inform this daily work, but did not live to complete it.<sup>45</sup> His advocacy of social catholicism is, however, evident more episodically. Employing the pseudonym of Testis, or ‘witness’, Blondel mounted a sustained defence of social catholicism against its detractors in a series of seven articles in the Annales de philosophie chrétienne.<sup>46</sup> This formed part of his patronage of a pioneering programme of Christian education created to bring theological reflection to bear on a pressing social and economic question: the *Semaines Sociales*.<sup>47</sup> Convened in a different French city each year, their aim was to bring together professionals, workers, clergy, students and other interested parties to reflect on the selected topic under the aegis of leading academics and practitioners. Blondel had earlier been the teacher of Marc Sangnier, founder of the pioneering catholic social movement *Le Sillon*, and had been involved in the establishment of his movement by contributing to its political journals, conferences, education and other projects.<sup>48</sup>

Blondel’s striking rhetoric directed against the caustically secularist Third Republic philosophes should not lead to the conclusion that his position is inherently anti-philosophical. He argues, in contrast, that reflective action, in encountering and transcending progressively wider horizons, becomes compelled to assent to the activity of an absolute principle motivating it, which he identifies with God. The theological reasoning associated with this ascent does not, he makes clear, supplant the philosophy

which has preceded it: ‘Far from all the rungs used to ascend to complete life having to be discarded as passing means, man completes his role by grounding absolutely the universal reality with which action has been nourished.’<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Blondel substantially redrafted the final chapter of *L’Action* between his thesis defence and its publication in order to guard against antimetaphysical interpretations.<sup>50</sup> He is thus impelled beyond both immanentist realism and idealism, demonstrating the insufficiency of a purely immanentist metaphysics, yet finding in the acknowledgement of the phenomenality of beings the ‘solidity of the being who sees them and makes them all what they are’.<sup>51</sup>

## REALITY AND THE PHENOMENON IN MODERN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

It would scarcely be possible to overstate the tremendous impact of Blondel’s philosophy of action on French catholic theology in the twentieth century. Apart from its formative influence on social catholicism already discussed, it was instrumental in Henri de Lubac’s revolutionary theology of the supernatural. The latter possesses clear Leibnizian connotations. Recent catholic teaching on the grace–nature relation has, moreover, restated essentially Blondelian perspectives. *Fides et Ratio* alludes openly to Blondel in its reference to ‘others’ who ‘produced a philosophy which, starting with an analysis of immanence, opened the way to the transcendent’ and acknowledges the practical autonomy of philosophy in relation to doctrine.<sup>52</sup> Yet the concrete and eucharistic setting which Blondel provided for his philosophy is rarely acknowledged. Christians must not become forgetful of the roots of the church as community and its social action in the substance of the eucharist transforming the world and granting it renewed consistency.

De Lubac absorbed Blondel’s philosophy of action during his three years of study at the Jesuit philosophy scholasticate on Jersey, where the reading of Blondel’s works was permitted though not encouraged, first meeting him in 1922.<sup>53</sup> On 3 April 1932 he wrote to Blondel with reflections on the supernatural for what would later become his seminal eponymous work. Of particular interest is de Lubac’s discussion in parts of his later work of Blondel’s allusions to the concept of pure nature, which de Lubac critically stated ‘needs to be taken up again in its entirety’.<sup>54</sup>

Central to de Lubac’s theology is an attempt to re-establish a relational understanding of nature and supernatural action as linked and interdependent. The critique of Jansenism formed a key point of departure for his own seminal *Supernatural* as it did for Leibniz.<sup>55</sup> From de Lubac’s Leibnizian perspective, Jansenist theology amounted to a curious iteration of the faults of the high scholasticism which it purported to oppose. He protests that Jansenius ‘sees the grace of God now reigning over the ruins of a nature formerly master of itself’, believes that only a small number of arbitrarily chosen people are elected to be saved, seeks to exclude all philosophical reasoning from theology, and maintains that grace totally masters the will, which becomes its tool.<sup>56</sup> These positions, when taken in

combination, amount to a comprehensive denial of the harmony between grace and nature, and because they completely separate the two, also deny the real, intimate dependence of concrete material nature on divine action.

Leibniz's correspondence with des Bosses coincided with the final crushing of the Jansenist movement. Its last stronghold, the Abbaye de Port-Royal des Champs in Rambouillet, was destroyed in 1711, and the papal bull Unigenitus Dei filius, condemning 101 propositions from Pasquier Quesnel's Réflexions morales, promulgated in 1713. Leibniz remained neutral in the conflict between the Jesuits and Jansenists, even in his correspondence with the Jesuit des Bosses, censuring the harsh polemic and brutal violence endemic in it. He nonetheless staunchly opposes some of the more extreme Jansenist positions and the notion of extrinsic grace.<sup>57</sup> At the same time he challenges a parallel extrinsicism in the high scholasticism of the period which regarded the eucharist as purely miraculous, rather than as exemplary of the dependence of the whole of material nature on divine action.

Leibniz wished, like de Lubac, to affirm the harmony of nature and grace and the dependence of nature on grace. He was moreover, again like de Lubac, convinced of the religious and even missionary import of his metaphysics.<sup>58</sup> With de Lubac these concerns become apparent in his opposition to the concept of 'pure nature', according to which beings in the natural world possess purely natural ends, appetites and powers, and are therefore unable to enjoy any form of relation with God.<sup>59</sup> Such a view had become associated with Thomas Cajetan, whose ideas had gained renewed influence because his commentary on the Summa theologiae had been included in the new official critical Leonine edition of that work.<sup>60</sup> De Lubac protests:

Nature was made for the supernatural, and, without having any right over it, nature is not explained without it. As a result, the whole natural order, not only in man but in the destiny of man, is already penetrated by something supernatural that shapes and attracts it.<sup>61</sup>

The search for the bond of substance can be seen as an attempt to establish this dependence of the natural on the supernatural rather than their coexistence in parallel universes. De Lubac identifies the overtly religious character of the vinculum in commending Blondel's 1930 synopsis of his 1893 thesis for its ability to shake the philosopher 'out of a critical slumber' and to 'plunge him into full reality' by directing the human mind 'towards the restoration of all things in Christ'.<sup>62</sup> De Lubac also develops Blondel's ecclesial perspective on the eucharistic bond<sup>63</sup>: the true significance of the bond, he argues, is revealed when divine charity unifies individuals into a single social body of faith and witness sustained by the bond love prepared in the eucharist, which anticipates the completion of the universe in Christ. He nevertheless remains convinced that ecclesial realism is dependent on sacramental realism, and that faith in the ecclesial body can only emerge from faith in the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic substance: 'Eucharistic realism and ecclesial realism: these two realisms support one another, each is the guarantee of the other.'<sup>64</sup> In one place, de Lubac offers a perspective on the eucharist founded on the

notion of the whole of creation being continually transformed in analogical representation of the worship of heaven. He states of the eucharist: 'It is not specifically liturgical. Far from restricting itself to describing a ceremony, or a figurative or commemorative act, it reaches out to cover the whole order of the Incarnation—unless we prefer to say ... that this whole order of the redemptive Incarnation should itself be considered as a vast liturgy, the earthly and temporal image of the eternal Liturgy which is taking place in Heaven.'<sup>65</sup>

Blondel's philosophy of action made an equally decisive impact on the spiritual resistance of French catholics to Nazi occupation via the work of Yves de Montcheuil, whom Étienne Foullioix describes as 'one of the first and the principal propagators of Blondelian thought within francophone catholic circles'.<sup>66</sup> De Montcheuil describes the implications of the *vinculum substantiale* for both materiality and action in an article of which Blondel stated his great approval.<sup>67</sup> Christ, de Montcheuil states, is the living bond of the human and the divine, unifying the will and thus making possible knowledge of himself as that bond. But Christ is equally the primordial element of the world, the firstborn of all creation in whom all things subsist. De Montcheuil's own life of action culminated in martyrdom at the hands of the Gestapo following his capture during a pastoral visit to members of the Resistance based near Grenoble. This ultimate priestly sacrifice should not, however, obscure de Montcheuil's concern to involve the whole of the body of the Church in resistance to tyranny through his lecturing, clandestine writing and pastoral ministry. The defence of justice is, he states, the duty of all people, and especially of all followers of Christ. Social witness must, therefore, be a lay initiative, and cannot be left solely to clergy.<sup>68</sup> This highly politicized ecclesiology shaped new understandings of lay participation in church mission in the aftermath of the war, and re-emerged in adapted form in the Vatican Two ecclesiology of Lumen gentium. It is the particular office of the laity, the document affirms, to 'seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God'. Yet as with de Lubac, the eucharistic context must not be forgotten. This engagement is described in specifically eucharistic terms: 'As those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.'<sup>69</sup>

These observations reveal continuity between a radicalized form of Blondelian social catholicism and emerging liberation theology. This movement, or collection of movements, far from being founded on secular Marxist ideology, possesses a theological dynamic which appropriates Blondel's theology of action and his concern for the concrete materiality of human life.<sup>70</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez assimilated Blondelian insights whilst undertaking his pre-ordination 'theological grand tour' of Europe during the 1950s, which included periods of residence in Louvain and Lyons,<sup>71</sup> where Blondel's ideas were pervasive. In his seminal Theology of Liberation, Gutiérrez identifies Blondel's conception of philosophy as critical reflection on action, and his associated discovery of the 'historical and existential viewpoint' of the concrete situation as a 'transnatural' state, as inspirational to his own

new apologetics which defines theology as critical reflection on praxis, describing Blondel as ‘one of the most important thinkers of contemporary theology, including the most recent trends’.<sup>72</sup> In another context, Leonardo Boff appropriates directly the concept of the vinculum substantiale as connecting all beings in the universe in a single eucharistic Christ in his ecological preference for the poor.<sup>73</sup> Proper appreciation of the Blondelian current within liberation theology demonstrates that the validity of the latter does not, fortunately, rest solely on the coherence or theological content of Marxist theory.<sup>74</sup>

Blondel’s realist interpretation of the later Leibniz might appear quixotic in the face of the current power of phenomenology. Heidegger maintains, in his essay on Leibniz in the Wegmarken—despite citing excerpts from the des Bosses correspondence—that the drive (Trieb) inherent in monads confers substantial unity on them, in a movement analogous with the representation and striving of the ego in the phenomenal realm, by means of a reaching out which is ecstatic but ultimately finite.<sup>75</sup> Gilles Deleuze conceives the bond of substance in philosophical terms, yet with suggestive theological overtones absent from Heidegger’s discussion. Deleuze draws on the work of the art historian Henri Focillon, who identifies the baroque as a tendency to repetition rather than a single historical period, associating it with the combination of opposites—privacy and commonality, motion and definition, spirit and matter—by means of the image of the ‘fold’, along which these dichotomies are continually defined, transcended and redefined. He asserts:

The essence of the Baroque entails neither falling into nor emerging from illusion but rather realizing something in illusion itself, or of tying it to a spiritual presence that endows its spaces and fragments with a collective unity.<sup>76</sup>

Deleuze identifies Leibniz as the theorist par excellence of the baroque, and there are indeed echoes in this statement of Blondel’s discovery of solidity within the phenomenon. Deleuze nevertheless interprets the vinculum substantiale as a ‘torsion of the world, an infinite fold ... the exterior or outside of its own interiority ... the unlocalizable primary link that borders the absolute interior’. He presents the vinculum equivocally as the possession of individual phenomena, whereas it is clear that in Leibniz’s own theory the vinculum is able to exist independently of the composite form which it unifies,<sup>77</sup> because it is unity and reality.

Blondel argues, contra Deleuze, that there is ultimately only one vinculum active in the universe, who is Christ, manifested in innumerable different instants. Such an affirmation could be construed in negative terms as capitulation to a transignification agenda which invalidly elides crucial and real distinctions between sacred and secular. Yet the route by which the affirmation has been reached in this essay suggests otherwise. Leibniz develops the concept of the vinculum substantiale because he perceives the aporia inherent in any non-theological metaphysics, urging a theological cosmology against metaphysical metanarrative. The contrary notion that material reality is entirely separable from divine action—or in other words, is really distinct from it—provides the basis for modern scientific and

philosophical paradigms divorced from theological reality. Leibniz through Blondel urges a theological turn to the concrete which proclaims the contingency and uniqueness of created being and the true reality of the phenomenon.

8,400 words

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, II.1–4 (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), pp. 39–41.

<sup>2</sup> Monadology, 3–5, 17–19, 37–40 in Philosophical Texts [subsequently *PT*], eds. R.S. Woolhouse and Richard Franks (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 267–81.

<sup>3</sup> Discourse on Metaphysics, 8–10 in *PT*, pp. 59–62. Leibniz in places encourages the view that he changed his mind, e.g. in the New System, 3–6, 11–15, in *PT*, pp. 145–51.

<sup>4</sup> Bertrand Russell, A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz (London: Allen and Unwin, 2nd edn, 1937), p. 152, dismisses the vinculum substantiale as ‘rather the concession of a diplomatist than the creed of a philosopher’.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion, eds. Allison Coudert, Richard Popkin and Gordon Weiner (London: Kluwer, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> A comparatively recent study is Paul Eisenkopf, Leibniz und die Einigung der Christenheit : Überlegungen zur Reunion der evangelischen und katholischen Kirche (Munich: Broschier, 1975). Leslie Armour, ‘Leibniz, Transubstantiation and the Relation between Pure and Applied Philosophy’, Philosophy in Context 19 (1989), pp. 33–46, highlights Leibniz’s conviction of the practical implications of his philosophy.

<sup>7</sup> Francisco Suárez, On the Formal Cause of Substance: Metaphysical Disputation XV (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2000), p. 70. I am grateful to anonymous readers for expanding my understanding of the scholastic background to the vinculum doctrine.

<sup>8</sup> José Ferrater Mora, ‘Suárez and Modern Philosophy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953), pp. 528–47, at p. 543.

<sup>9</sup> R. Jolivet, « Suárez et le problème du ‘vinculum substantiale’ » in Actas del IV Centenario del Nacimiento de Francisco Suárez, 1548–1948 (2 vols.; Madrid: Dirección General de Propaganda, 1948) I, pp. 235–50, at pp. 235–42.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Baruzi, Leibniz et l’organisation religieuse de la Terre (Paris: Alcan, 1907), pp. 46–105.

<sup>11</sup> Christiane Frémont, L’Être et la relation: avec trente-sept lettres de Leibniz au R.P. des Bosses (Paris: Vrin, 2nd edn, 1999). Brief selections are included in ‘Correspondence with des Bosses’, in Philosophical Papers and Letters, ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969), pp. 596–617. The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence, trans. and eds. Brandon Look and Donald Rutherford (Yale University Press, 2007), providing a full translation, is forthcoming. All page references to the letters are from the Frémont edition.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae Ia, q. 51, a. 2 (60 vols.; London: Blackfriars, 1962–76), 9, pp. 34–37.

<sup>13</sup> Letters of 20 September, 4 and 16 October 1706, pp. 107, 111, 115. Brandon Look, ‘On Substance and Relations in Leibniz’s Correspondence with des Bosses’, in Leibniz and His Correspondents, ed. Paul Lodge (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 260, also states, on the basis of Leibniz’s draft of a letter about composite substance written for des Bosses but not despatched that refers to the continui vinculo, that the vinculum substantiale concept was not originally created to account for transubstantiation.

<sup>14</sup> The importance of the eucharist in Leibniz’s early and middle periods is discussed in two excellent articles by D.L. Fouke: ‘Metaphysics and the Eucharist in the Early Leibniz’, Studia leibnitiana 24, 2 (1992), pp. 145–59; and ‘Dynamics and Transubstantiation in Leibniz’s Systema Theologicum’, Journal of the History of Philosophy 32 (1994), pp. 45–61.

- <sup>15</sup> Leibniz justifies this method in his earlier essay ‘On transubstantiation’ in Philosophical Papers and Letters, pp. 115–18.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter of 8 September 1709, p. 173.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter of January 1710, pp. 177–78.
- <sup>18</sup> Letter of 20 September 1712, p. 218. I translate vinculum, departing from Loemker, as ‘bond’ rather than ‘chain’.
- <sup>19</sup> E.J. Aiton, Leibniz: A Biography (Bristol: Adam Hilger, 1985), p. 330; G.J. Jordan, The Reunion of the Churches: A Study of G.W. Leibnitz and his Great Attempt (London: Constable, 1927), pp. 36–37.
- <sup>20</sup> New Essays Concerning Human Understanding, IV.20 (London: Macmillan, 1896), pp. 611–12.
- <sup>21</sup> René Descartes, Fourth Set of Replies to Objections to the Meditations on First Philosophy in The Philosophical Writings of Descartes II (3 vols.; Cambridge University Press, 1984–91), pp. 172–77.
- <sup>22</sup> Letters to Arnauld of 1671, Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, I (7 vols; Berlin, 1875–90; Hildesheim, 1978), p. 75; and to des Bosses of 10 October 1712, Philosophischen Schriften II, p. 461. See the excellent exposition of Robert Merrihew Adams, Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 299–307.
- <sup>23</sup> Discourse on Metaphysics, 7, 16, in PT, pp. 58–59, 68–69.
- <sup>24</sup> Letter of 5 February 1712, p. 197.
- <sup>25</sup> Letter of 26 May 1712, p. 209.
- <sup>26</sup> Letter of 26 May 1712, p. 209.
- <sup>27</sup> Maurice Blondel, paper of 5 December 1919, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin – Maurice Blondel: Correspondence (New York: Herder & Herder, 1976), p. 23.
- <sup>28</sup> Claude Troisfontaines, « Blondel et le ‘lien substantiel’ chez Leibniz : une pierre d’attente pour la médiation christique » in Le Christ de Maurice Blondel, ed. René Virgoulay (Paris: Desclée, 2003), pp. 116–20.
- <sup>29</sup> Yvette Périco, « De la foi au Christ à la Christologie philosophique » in Le Christ de Maurice Blondel, pp. 20–24.
- <sup>30</sup> Maurice Blondel, De vinculo substantiali et de substantia composita apud Leibnitium (Paris: Alcan, 1893); trans. Le Lien substantiel et la substance composée d’après Leibniz (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1972), p. 215.
- <sup>31</sup> Pierre de Tournemine, « Conjectures sur l’union de l’ame et de corps » in Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et des beaux arts 91 (1703), p. 870. See Alfred Boehm, Le ‘Vinculum substantiale’ chez Leibniz: ses origines historiques (Paris: Vrin, 1938), pp. 84–91; Gaston Sortais, « Le Cartésianisme chez les jésuites français au xvii<sup>e</sup> et au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle », Archives de philosophie 6 (1929), pp. 63–65.
- <sup>32</sup> Appendix to letter of 5 February 1712, pp. 200–201.
- <sup>33</sup> Monadology 18–19 in PT, p. 270.
- <sup>34</sup> Blondel, paper of 5 December 1919, Teilhard–Blondel: Correspondence, p. 23.
- <sup>35</sup> Maurice Blondel, Une énigme historique : le ‘vinculum substantiale’ d’après Leibniz et l’ébauche d’un réalisme supérieur (Paris: Beauchesne, 1930), pp. 130–31.
- <sup>36</sup> Blondel, Une énigme historique, p. 82.
- <sup>37</sup> Blondel, Une énigme historique, p. 83.
- <sup>38</sup> For a useful overview of the modern history of the structure of degrees in French higher education, including the differences between the doctorat d’université and the prestigious doctorat d’état, see ‘Philosophy and the French education system’ in Gary Gutting, French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 391–93.
- <sup>39</sup> Quoted in John W. Sullivan, ‘Matter for Heaven: Blondel, Christ and Creation’, Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses 64 (1998), p. 66.
- <sup>40</sup> See especially Jacques Flamand, L’Idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1969).



- <sup>41</sup> Maurice Blondel, L'Action : essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique (Paris: Alcan, 1893); trans. Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice, §§ 28, 367 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 40, 339.
- <sup>42</sup> Action, § 371, p. 342.
- <sup>43</sup> Action, § 412, p. 379.
- <sup>44</sup> Journal note of 1 February 1890, cited in Périco, « De la foi au Christ à la Christologie philosophique », p. 24.
- <sup>45</sup> Pierre de Cointet, « Le Médiateur : La Trilogie et La Philosophie et l'Esprit chrétien » in Le Christ de Maurice Blondel, pp. 151–52.
- <sup>46</sup> Maurice Blondel, Une alliance contre nature : catholicisme et intégrisme : la Semaine sociale de Bordeaux 1910 (Brussels: Lessius, 2000). The third article is translated in Communio (US) 26 (1999), pp. 846–74.
- <sup>47</sup> Peter Bernardi, 'Maurice Blondel and the Renewal of the Nature-Grace Relationship', Communio (US) 26 (1999), pp. 806–45; Alexander Dru, 'From the Action Française to the Second Vatican Council: Blondel's La Semaine Sociale de Bordeaux', Downside Review 81 (1963), pp. 226–45. For a general description, see Peter Bernardi, 'Social modernism: the case of the Semaines Sociales', in Catholicism Contending with Modernity. Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-modernism in Historical Context, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 277–307. The website of the Semaines Sociales de France is at <http://www.ssf-fr.org/>.
- <sup>48</sup> René Virgoulay, Blondel et le Modernisme : la philosophie de l'action et les sciences religieuses, 1896–1913 (Paris: Cerf, 1980), pp. 149–79.
- <sup>49</sup> Action, § 424, p. 389.
- <sup>50</sup> Action, p. xxix.
- <sup>51</sup> Action, § 460, p. 420.
- <sup>52</sup> Fides et Ratio, § 59 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1998), p. 89. Further specific Blondelian motifs are identified in John W. Sullivan, 'Philosophy as Pilgrimage: Blondel and John Paul II', Downside Review 117 (1999), pp. 1–16. See also Peter Henrici, 'The One who went Unnamed: Maurice Blondel in the Encyclical Fides et Ratio', Communio (US) 26 (1999), pp. 609–21.
- <sup>53</sup> Henri de Lubac, At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), pp. 18–19.
- <sup>54</sup> De Lubac, At the Service of the Church, p. 184. See especially Henri de Lubac, A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), pp. 37, 48.
- <sup>55</sup> Henri de Lubac, Surnaturel (Paris: Aubier, 1946), pp. 38–85, 157–83; Augustinianism and Modern Theology (New York: Crossroad, 2000), pp. 31–86, 235–77.
- <sup>56</sup> De Lubac, Augustinianism, pp. 68, 61, 72. See Antonio Russo, Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia. L'influsso di Blondel (Rome: Studium, 1990), pp. 165–77.
- <sup>57</sup> Letter of 12 September 1708, p. 143.
- <sup>58</sup> F.R. Merkel, 'The Missionary Attitude of the Philosopher G.W. Leibniz' in Christianity and Missions, 1450–1800, ed. J.S. Cummins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 297–98.
- <sup>59</sup> De Lubac, Augustinianism, pp. 158–59.
- <sup>60</sup> Summa Theologiae ad codices manuscriptos Vaticanos exacta cum Supplemento et Commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani, Ordinis Praedicatorum, S.R.E. cardinalis (9 vols.; Rome: Typographia Polyglotta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1888–1906), which forms vols. IV–XII of the Omnia Opera (50 vols.; 1882–).
- <sup>61</sup> Henri de Lubac, 'Internal causes of the weakening and disappearance of the sense of the sacred' in Theology in History (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996), p. 231.

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- <sup>62</sup> Henri de Lubac, “‘Vinculum substantiale’” in Theological Fragments (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), pp. 401–403.
- <sup>63</sup> For which see Mario Antonelli, ‘Trinity and Eucharist in Blondel’, Communio (US) 27 (2000), pp. 284–99.
- <sup>64</sup> Henri de Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, trans. Gemma Simmonds (London: SCM, 2006), p. 252.
- <sup>65</sup> De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, p. 194.
- <sup>66</sup> Étienne Foullio, Yves de Montcheuil, philosophe et théologien jésuite (1900–1944) (Paris: Médiasèvres, 1995), p. 20. See also David Grumett, ‘Yves de Montcheuil: Action, Justice and the Kingdom in Spiritual Resistance to Nazism’, Theological Studies, in press.
- <sup>67</sup> Yves de Montcheuil, « Les Problèmes du vinculum leibnizien », in Mélanges théologiques (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1946), pp. 289–95; letter of 3 November 1948, in de Lubac, At the Service of the Church, p. 378.
- <sup>68</sup> Yves de Montcheuil, For Men of Action (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Dome, 1964), pp. 21–24, 154–57, 162. For de Montcheuil’s wider theology of lay vocation, see his excellent essay “The catholic concept of vocation”, pp. 47–66.
- <sup>69</sup> ‘Lumen gentium’, §§ 31, 34, in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, ed. N.P. Tanner, II (2 vols.; London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), pp. 875, 877.
- <sup>70</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology (London: SCM, 2000), p. 238.
- <sup>71</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology (Maryland, NY: Orbis, 1990), p. 25.
- <sup>72</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation (London: SCM, rev. edn, 1988), pp. 7–8, 44–45.
- <sup>73</sup> Leonardo Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), p. 184.
- <sup>74</sup> David Grumett, ‘Blondel, the Philosophy of Action and Liberation Theology’, awaiting publication.
- <sup>75</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘From the Last Marburg Lecture Course’, in Pathmarks (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 65–66.
- <sup>76</sup> Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque (London: Athlone, 2001), pp. 110–113; cf. Henri Focillon, The Art of the West (2 vols.; London: Phaidon, 1963), I, p. 132, n. 1; II, pp. 139–57.
- <sup>77</sup> Brandon Look, Leibniz and the ‘vinculum substantiale’, Studia Leibnitiana 30 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1999), p. 89.